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SIGNED AND SEALED: IPL TEAMS RR AND RCB SOLD FOR HUGE AMOUNTS

After months of negotiations, defending champions and inaugural winners will have new owners post IPL. Deal subject to BCCI approval

RR FOR OVER ₹15,200CR, RCB FOR ₹16,700CR

If both the deals are cleared, the owners are expected to take charge post the 19th edition of the league. While RR was bagged for $1.63bn, RCB was purchased for just over $1.78bn. While the former was picked by a consortium fronted by US-based entrepreneur, Kal Somani, the latter was fronted by a consortium led by Aditya Birla Group

FACES BEHIND THE TWO CONSORTIUMS

- Both franchises are bringing in new owners who have a track record of owning sports properties in other leagues. In fact, Somani, has been an investor with Royals since 2021
- Teams are attractive to US-based individuals and companies because of closed-door league, TV rights deal and potential for growth | P17

$67mn, $111mn

RR WAS PICKED FOR $67MN WHILE RCB WAS SIGNED FOR $111MN BEFORE 1ST IPL

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

SCs, STs clash as man drinks water in farm; 15 injured

RAGHOTTAM KOPPAR @Gadag

A village in Gadag district witnessed a group clash between SC and ST communities after a young man drank water from a field of a farmer belonging to another community. In the clash, 15 villagers from both sides sustained injuries and have been admitted to hospital.

The clash was between SC and ST communities at Chikkavaddatti village of Mundargi taluk. The young man from the Madiga community was going through the land of a farmer from Valmiki community when he had a drink of water as it was extremely hot. Another farmer, also from Valmiki community, objected.

Soon, the information spread in the village and people from both communities gathered and indulged in a verbal duel that escalated into a full-blown fight. The two sides threw stones at each other, in which 15 persons were injured. While many were discharged after first-aid, others were admitted to the hospital.

Some villagers alerted the Mundargi police, who arrived at the village and brought the situation under control. They have kept vigil since Monday night.

Superintendent of Police Rohan Jagadish said, "We visited the village and ensured tight security. Officers have been told to maintain vigil for the next two days. The villagers were warned not to continue the clash."

PM: LEAST POSSIBLE IMPACT ON INDIA

The PM underlined efforts to reduce dependence on a single source of energy. "The crisis has shaken the global economy. Continuous efforts are being made to ensure that India suffers the least possible impact"

TRUMP LIKES PAK'S MEDIATION OFFER

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday endorsed Pakistan's offer to be the host to facilitate talks to end the West Asia conflict by re-sharing Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif's post on the Truth Social platform

Don dials Modi on de-escalation

Both leaders discuss the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz secure and accessible to all

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday spoke with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, focusing on the urgent need to de-escalate tensions in West Asia and keeping the critical global shipping route of the Strait of Hormuz open, safe and accessible for the whole world.

"Received a call from President Trump and had a useful exchange of views on the situation in West Asia. India supports de-escalation and restoration of peace at the earliest. Ensuring that the Strait of Hormuz remains open, secure and accessible is essential for the whole world. We agreed to stay in touch regarding efforts towards peace and stability," Modi wrote on X.

US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, too, highlighted the maritime safety aspect, saying "President Donald Trump just spoke with Prime Minister Modi. They discussed the ongoing situation in the Middle East, including the importance of keeping the Strait open."

The conversation is the first between Modi and Trump since the US and Israel launched strikes against Iran on February 28. It comes amid rising tensions and sharply rising energy prices.

On Monday, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had held conversation with US counterpart Marco Rubio.

Washington has signalled cautious diplomatic engagement with Tehran. It has emerged that the US has engaged Pakistan, Egypt and Turkiye in back-channel for looking at solutions for ending the war with Iran. India has also engaged directly with regional leaders. Modi spoke over the weekend with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Shortly after his call with Trump, Modi spoke to Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake about the crisis due to the war.

DAY 25 WAR WATCH

Serious consequences if crisis continues: PM

Amid a deepening global energy crisis, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday addressed the Rajya Sabha and said prolonged instability could lead to unavoidable and serious consequences. "If the global circumstances created by this war persist for a long time, serious consequences are inevitable. Therefore, India is accelerating the resilience-building measures it has undertaken in recent years," he said. "During the great crisis of the pandemic, the Centre and the states together presented an excellent model of COVID management. We must continue to work in the same spirit", he asserted

Pvt sector growth slips to 3.5-yr low as war impacts demand

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mumbai

PRIVATE sector business activities, as measured by HSBC Flash India PMI Composite Output, fell to a three-and-a-half-year low in March amid a drastic drop in demand and a spike in costs due to the ongoing West Asia conflict.

The index slipped to 56.5 in March, marking the weakest growth since October 2022. The composite PMI was 58.9 in February.

HSBC attributed the poor show to the West Asia conflict, weaker domestic demand, market instability, and inflationary pressures. "Output growth eased across both manufacturing and services as the energy shock unfolds. Softer domestic demand weighed on new orders, which rose at the slowest pace in more than three years, despite a record surge in new export orders. Cost pressures intensified, but companies are absorbing part of the increase by squeezing margins," said Pranjul Bhandari, chief economist at HSBC India.

The slowdown was more pronounced in the manufacturing sector, where output growth eased amid global uncertainties. Factory output expanded at its slowest pace since August 2021.

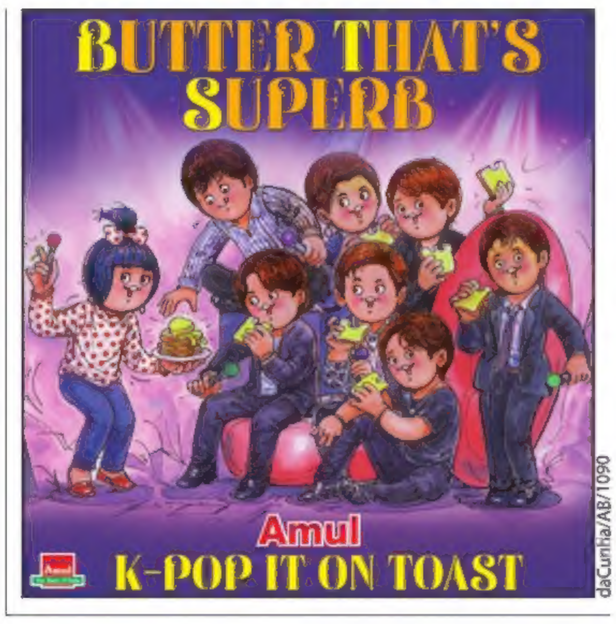
The manufacturing PMI dropped to 53.8 in March from 56.9 in February, a four-and-a-half-year low, while the manufacturing output index fell to 55.1.

Services activity also moderated, with the business activity index easing to 57.2 from 58.1, marking the weakest growth since January 2025.

On a positive note, data showed that exports remained strong, driven by robust demand from Asia, Europe, the US, and West Asia.

Re slumps 23 paise, hits new low

The rupee on Tuesday dropped 23 paise to close at 93.76 against the US dollar as a stronger greenback, elevated global crude prices, and FPI outflows weighed on the local currency



CAG flags fraud, irregularities in K'taka MNREGA

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

A section of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report, which was tabled in the Assembly on Tuesday, focused on large-scale irregularities in the MNREGA scheme in the state, revealing fraudulent transactions in housing projects, where payments were made for already completed houses, ineligible beneficiaries were paid, workers were handed wages without any construction work being carried out and workers were paid beyond prescribed limits.

At many worksites, drinking water, medical aid and child care facilities were not available, discouraging women and elderly from taking part in work.

WORKSITE FACILITIES

- 60% said childcare facilities were unavailable
- 49% said reported first aid/ medical aid was not present
- 30% said shade was unavailable
- 9% reported lack of drinking water

(400 beneficiaries surveyed)

A large number of approved projects under the scheme were not taken up, while many works remained incomplete for over a year, it stated. "Convergence of MGNREGS works utilising the technical/financial resources of other departments was not effective due to the absence of prescribed institutional support and lack of co-ordination with the line departments," it pointed out.

The attendance of workers was not marked or signature/thumb impression not taken in 50 random cases, but Rs 5.51 lakh was paid to workers, it stated.

The CAG also raised concerns over genuineness of employment. At the same time, 497 workers employed in 17 different works of 13 gram panchayats were not paid Rs 10.98 lakh, though they had worked and provided required documents. This is against the basic objective of the scheme. In some cases, excess payment had been made, it stated. As technical committees at district and taluk level were not formed, irregularities like preparation of unrealistic estimates, improper execution of works and irregular expenditure were committed.

"Expenditure was incurred in excess of sanctions on account of non-revision of estimates as stipulated in Scheme guidelines. Material costs for individual works were paid directly to vendors, instead of beneficiaries, in violation of Government instructions," it added.

SC: Scheduled Caste tag limited to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist faiths

UDAYAN KISHORE @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Tuesday held that only individuals belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, or Buddhist faiths can be considered members of a Scheduled Caste (SC), and conversion to any other faith will result in the person losing the SC status.

"No person who professes a religion other than Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist shall be a member of Scheduled Caste. Conversion to any other religion results in immediate and complete loss of the Scheduled Caste status," the court said, while upholding an order of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

A bench of justices P K Mishra and Manmohan passed the order on an appeal filed by Pastor Chinthada Anand, who alleged that he faced caste discrimination from one Akkala Ramireddy and others. Anand filed a complaint against Ramireddy under the SC/ST Act and the police lodged an FIR.

Ramireddy then approached the Andhra Pradesh HC. The HC quashed the FIR on the ground that Anand had lost his SC status upon conversion to Christianity and, therefore, cannot claim protection under the SC/ST Act. It had held that Anand holding an SC certificate will not help his case since conversion to Christianity, where caste distinctions do not exist, nullifies the SC status.

The Supreme Court upheld the HC order. "We have no hesitation in holding that the appellant (Anand), having ceased to be a member of the Madiga community upon his conversion to Christianity, and having failed to establish any subsequent reconversion, does not satisfy the mandatory Constitutional requirement for claiming the status of Scheduled Caste," the bench ruled.

Ajit Pawar's nephew files plaint in B'luru, sees conspiracy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

ALLEGING conspiracy behind the death of late Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar in a plane crash on January 28, his 40-year-old nephew Rohit Rajendra Pawar, MLA of Karjat-Jamkhed Assembly constituency in Maharashtra, filed a complaint at the High Grounds police station on Monday. The police, after registering a zero FIR, transferred the case to the jurisdictional Baramati Rural police station.

Rohit filed the complaint in the city after police stations in Maharashtra declined to entertain it. He claimed that the incident was a "result of a larger criminal conspiracy" aimed at eliminating Ajit Pawar. A case of murder (BNS 103), culpable homicide not amounting to murder (BNS 105), causing death by negligence (BNS 106) along with other sections of BNS was registered. P6

HOME RUN

A herd of over 25 elephants that had ventured into coffee estates in Thithimathi of Kodagu district being driven back to the forests during a drive conducted by the forest department on Tuesday | SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

GAME MODE ON

Security high, Chinnaswamy gates will open only 4 hours before match

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Bengaluru police have made elaborate security and traffic arrangements for IPL 2026 cricket matches at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on March 28 and April 5.

City Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh told the media on Tuesday that arrangements have been made as per the recommendations of a committee formed by the state government that had top officials from different departments.

"The gates to the stadium will open four hours before the match, and those without tickets will not be allowed to stand near the stadium. QR-code based electronic ticketing system, including a Metro pass, has been introduced. The match ticket price and Metro fare are combined so that people need not buy Metro train tickets separately (to and from). Parking is banned around the stadium," he said.

"Fans are requested to use both Cubbon Park and MG Road Metro stations. BMRCL has arranged parking facilities at places from where fans board trains. As Queen's Road gets congested, except for two entry/exit points all other entries have been closed. Maximum entry to the stadium will be from Cubbon Road that has 9 metre-high gates. There will be 28 openings from this road, and four entry points on the Link Road," he said. P2

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) batters Virat Kohli and Phil Salt during a practice session at Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru | X

Foresters party on roadside, attack scribe

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

FOREST staff were found drinking alcohol and partying on the roadside near Moodalakoppalu on the Hunsur State Highway late on Monday night. A journalist, who went to record the foresters for partying in a public place which is against the law, was attacked and made to delete the video he had shot. However, a part of the recording remained in his mobile phone, which he uploaded and that has gone viral.

The forest personnel had gathered on the roadside and were partying at midnight. Journalist Vishanth reached the spot and as he was videographing them, they confronted him, leading to a heated argument. The situation soon escalated and he was assaulted. Vishanth sought treatment at a hospital, where a medico-legal case was registered. He later filed a formal complaint at the Bilikere police station.

Harish departs days after euthanasia order

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

HARISH Rana, the first person in India to be granted permission for passive euthanasia in a landmark judgment by the Supreme Court earlier this month, died on Tuesday at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), days after his nutritional support was withdrawn.

"Harish Rana passed away at 4.10 pm on March 24 at AIIMS, Delhi," the hospital said.

The Supreme Court had permitted passive euthanasia for Harish on March 11. He was moved to the palliative care unit of AIIMS's Dr B R Ambedkar Institute Rotary Cancer Hospital on March 14. Subsequently, Harish's nutritional support was gradually withdrawn. A specialised medical team headed by Dr Seema Mishra was constituted to implement the process.

The 31-year-old had been in a coma for over 13 years after falling from the fourth floor of a building in 2013. Harish's family expressed hope that the court's decision could help others facing similar situations.